

THE BEST POEMS OF 1931



The
BEST POEMS
of 1931

Selected by
THOMAS MOULT
& decorated by
ELIZABETH MONTGOMERY



NEW YORK

Harcourt Brace & Co.

1931

· FIRST PUBLISHED 1931

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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To
THE MEMORY
of
KATHARINE TYNAN
and
ERNEST HARTSOCK

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INTRODUCTION

TEN years have passed since the first volume of this annual series was issued, and it is with the utmost gratification that the editor announces the completion of a decade in its history which, following immediately after the war, has been an uncommonly critical one for poetry. By virtue of these compilations, which are harvestings of what the editor believes to be the best poems printed in the periodicals, as distinct from books, during a specified period—in the present instance between July 1930 and June 1931—poetry-readers have been enabled to follow the development of the art in Great Britain, Ireland, and the U.S.A. His thanks to the poets represented, and to their editors and the poetry-loving public, without whose co-operation the series would not be possible, have been offered year by year; but he cannot let this special occasion pass without giving thanks to them all over again.

Of the poets whose work has been reprinted in the ten volumes it is interesting to note that the names of ten who appeared in 1922 are to be found in the following pages. Edmund Blunden, W. H. Davies, Sylvia Lynd, Harold Monroe, J. C. Squire, and Katharine Tynan represent one side of the Atlantic, and John Gould Fletcher, Alfred Kreymborg, David Morton, and Leonora Speyer represent the other side. So do our poets continue, in a world where names, nearly everywhere else, flash forth and vanish with pathetic swiftness! It is to be noted with regret, though, that the name of Katharine Tynan will probably have been printed in this series for the last time. She takes her place in the growing list of poets whose work, represented at one time or another in these volumes, has ended since the appearance of *The Best Poems of 1922*—a list that includes Thomas Hardy, George Sterling, John Freeman, Charlotte Mew, Elinor Wylie, Amy Lowell,

Alice Meynell and D. H. Lawrence. And here, in order to show how Time has taken toll, we may repeat the names of those to whom, in accordance with a custom by which tribute is paid year after year to the lately dead, these annual volumes have been dedicated in memory: Alice Meynell, Maurice Hewlett, Herbert Trench, Amy Lowell, T. W. H. Crosland, Charles M. Doughty, Israel Zangwill, Eva Gore-Booth, George Sterling, Thomas Hardy, John Freeman, Robert Bridges, Edward Carpenter, and David Herbert Lawrence.

By a happy circumstance the tenth volume of *The Best Poems* series has the distinction of including 'The Souls of the Righteous,' by Robert Nichols, which appeared during the year in *The Times* newspaper, London, and occupied two columns. That Mr. Nichols has readily granted permission is the compiler's pride. Grateful acknowledgment is made to him especially, and to all the others who are represented in the following pages. Students will observe that by a good chance Mr. Noyes's two poems appear side by side, thus illustrating vividly his varied technique. One is taut and precise, the other has the freedom of rhythm and thought sought after by the *vers librist*. The poems by Dorothy Parker and Robert Hillyer have appeared, or are about to appear, in volumes entitled, respectively, *Death and Taxes* and *The Gates of the Compass*, published by the Viking Press, New York; Margaret Emerson Bailey's 'White Christmas' will appear in a volume of that name to be issued by Messrs. Putnams, New York; and the poems by Geoffrey Johnson, Sylvia Lynd, and Wilfred Gibson have recently been included in *The Quest Unending* (Selwyn and Blount), *The Yellow Placard* (Victor Gollancz), and *Hazards* (Macmillan and Co.), by these three authors in the order they and the titles are given.

THOMAS MOULT

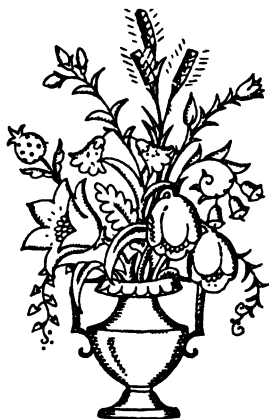
A. R. UBSDELL

TO A SKYLARK

BUT why
Waste that on the sky?
All that long
Delicious song
Like a rainbow calling,
Each note a star falling
In jewelled rain?
Why sing in vain
To the vacuous air
Up there,
When there are heathered hills
And dancing daffodils
Whose bells would ring the strain
Of your gold notes again
By laughing water
Or by lichen'd tor?

O tell
Me your secret spell
That can charm
The silver-warm
Days of hay-scented summer,
Teach me, a fool mummer,
A scribbler of rhyme,
All the sublime
Echoes that ring
In the song you sing.
For now I cannot choose,
I have but words to use,
Which in jumbled throngs
Stumble about my songs,

While the scarce-whispered note
From your throat
Is more lovely than the day.
Teach me, strange bird, the way,
That I may write my song anew
For you.



STANLEY KIMMEL

NIGGERS

DOWN in the underground are the shovel hands,
Nigger hands lifting black loads into the air,
Nigger hands swinging steel shovels up and over
shining black shoulders,
Nigger hands lost in the darkness.

*Swing low, shovel hands,
Swing low, banjo hands gone wrong.*

Niggers dream of nigger love.
Niggers dream of watermelon moon.
Overhead are great slabs of coal.
Is there never an end to toil?

Swing low, shovel hands, banjo hands . . .



JOHN GALSWORTHY

SWEET OATH IN MALLORCA

IF you had, suddenly, been where I've been
Under the sun among the almond flowers,
If you had dreamed and seen what I have seen —
The old grey olives and the old grey towers;
If, in bewilderment, there had come to you
Over the hills, beneath the evening star,
The tinkling of the sheep-bells, or the blue
Gleaming from where the happy wild flowers are;
If you'd been wafted to that fairyland,
And in delight been lost and lost again,
And, walking with me, waved a friendly hand
To children smiling with the eyes of Spain,
And in full day beheld the young moon fly —
Then had you sworn the same sweet oath as I.



ROBERT P. TRISTRAM COFFIN

SUNFLOWERS

THE dials of these honeyed clocks
Fringed with leaves of sun
Turn obedient to the wheels
That make the daystar run.

These are the eyes that stare at one
Unblinking as the ox,
With the steady disregard
Of faces of old clocks.

They see and know, but what it is
They know and see is not
To be taken in that snare
We men call a thought.

It is too bright to be enclosed
In midnight made of bone,
It is too living in its wings
To perch and brood alone.

It is as sharp as two-edged swords,
It turns the edge of thunder;
It travels farther into space
Than arrows of our wonder.

It is a thing whose name is Sweet;
In their honeycomb
Wild bees dream of it but may
Not bring its essence home.

In the high hours of the sun
These eyes are wide with scorn
Looking through us things of bone
That perish, being born.

But when they turn their level gaze
Where the low sun lies,
There is pity for us men
In these hot, sad eyes.



WILFRID GIBSON

THE ENTERPRISE

DOWN the long street he limps with anxious eye
Upon the close-shut doors, as he goes by,
Hoping to see them open to his cry—
Old rags and bones and rabbit-skins.

While in a tenement, as he goes by,
A baby, opening a dazzled eye
And uttering a first bewildered cry,
The enterprise of life begins.

The old man does not hear the baby cry;
And it, regarding life with puzzled eye,
Knows naught of the old hawker passing by
To whom the journey it begins

Is but a limping down long streets, with eye
Upon the close-shut doors, as he goes by
Hoping to see them open to his cry—
Old rags and bones and rabbit-skins.



LAURENCE POWYS

THE TRAMP SHIP

A TRAMP ship from the fog-bound northern sea,
Blinding a course through sleet and angry
foam,
Swung into berth beside the shivering quay,
That winter's dawn to bring my lover home.

The dock-hands stirred, and cursed themselves
awake,
Mocking the grimy tramp, all bent and torn
By murderous wave and fierce ice-pointed flake—
And yet to me, whose prayers were for that
morn,

More wonderful than purple Tyrian ships,
Or golden galleons coming home to Spain,
When he caressed and comforted my lips,
Seemed the poor hulk that gave me him again.



JOHN LEE HIGGINS

GROWTH

ALL winter bits of fog and rain
Watered the earth; and sunken snows
Made runnels to the tangled roots,
While beetles, moles and purple worms
Were dry and rustling in their holes.

But now the small inhabitants
Within the under cosmos stir,
Awakened by a beaten gong,
Alarmed by sudden pains of birth.

The swollen bulb and burgeoned shoot,
With folded rainbows in their sheaths,
Shoulder away the walls of dirt,
And pierce a shaft of light and winds.

And elfin miners in the ground
Climb up the ladders of the earth
With buckets filled, and crocus buds
Are dumped in gold heaps on the grass.

G. ROSTREVOR HAMILTON

NATIVE FOREST

FAST-ROOTED, with no sound, no stir,
 Stood up magnificent the trees:
And what had I, a traveller
 Distraught, to do with these?

Cool-throated in that green arcade,
 The singing birds took wing and rose:
And what had I, whom Nature made
 Of Earth, to do with those?

Yet wildness of the singing bird,
 And stillness of the anchored green—
Nothing more native have I heard,
 Nothing more native seen:

For now the forest trees dark-lit
 My dark imagination throng,
And bright words in the branches flit,
 The flying gold of song.



ERNEST HARTSOCK

SECOND COMING

HE found us like the deathly thief
In all our night of unbelief;

A new star, like the Magi's gem
Above a blind new Bethlehem.

He lighted up the little way
Of men lost fearfully in clay.

Firefly or foxfire he was not,
But some eternal burning spot,
Some faggot that the gods forgot,

Some alien torch that dropped in place
From bonfires on the fields of space;

With beauty almost blasphemous
He aureoled and haloed us.

And we who had not known before
The white of daisies by a door,
The white of cloud and sycamore,

Knew suddenly the feathered frond
Of angels' wings—and worlds beyond.

Though some men craven with their fear
Shaded their eyes when he grew near,

Some men who did not dread the glow,
Went close and were translucent so,
With souls like hexagons of snow.

For we who once were darkened glass
Through which men's gazes could not pass,
Each opened and a rainbow was!

FRANK KENDON

THE WIND AND THE CORN

*THE wind across the standing corn,
Upon an August day:*

When you were green, that now are ripe,
I kissed the maid of May.
She had hawthorn petal-shells
On her cap and gown;
But I came over Grasstop hill
And blew the petals down!

In thirty days, or thirty-one,
About the first of June,
When you were ankle-deep and dark
Beneath a growing moon,
I stole softly here and there,
Softly far and near;
In river meadow or Grasstop hill
I could not find my dear.

When you are reaped, that now be ripe,
You will not feel the rain;
But I shall wake with new-year Spring
To find the maid again.
Cherry petal shells she'll wear
In her morning gown,
And I'll come over Grasstop hill
And shake the petals down—
Down, down, down again,
And shake the petals down!

ANDERSON M. SCRUGGS

OLD HOUSES

THERE is a mystery old houses know
The years will ever keep inviolate:
An essence of the past, the long ago
That hovers round the eaves, the muted gate,
The shaded gravel walk that idly winds
Between the ranks of tulips time has sundered;
There is a secret guarded by shut blinds,
The bold and prying world has never plundered.

If you have loved old houses, never yearn
To break their seals of silence and of death;
It is enough forgotten dreams return
Within the lilac's faint and fitful breath.
Pause at the gate, and feel your heart expand,
But never hope to know, or understand.



MARIE LUHRS

WOMEN DREAM

WOMEN bowed over their babies that cry,
Or women bent over their typewriter keys,
Young women in the theatre kicking high,
Or old women scrubbing floors on their knees;

Women dragging their ravished flesh through life,
Or women with starved nostrils wondering;
Women masters or slaves, at peace or in strife,
Are all holding in their hearts the same thing:

They dream themselves watching a limpid ocean;
Under the tree of life they watch for ships,
Till the wind, stroking the branches to motion,
Blows love, a sudden petal, on their lips.



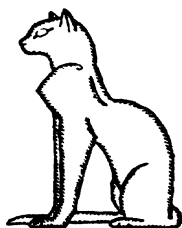
JULIAN HUXLEY

FLOWER AND FRUIT

MY soul has been a coward,
— Withered at the root.
How if it has not flowered
Shall it bear fruit?

Now its flowering time is done,
Only now I comprehend
What the race I might have run
(Race of joy that is not won)
— O love unfelt, and little done.
And youth that draws to an end!

I did not see the treasure
At home in my breast;
I searched this world for pleasure,
But found no rest.



ROBERT HILLYER

IN THE TIDAL MARSHES

WHITE above the afterflare
The moon rides up the brimming air
Singing in minor key the theme
Of light in music as a dream.
Lovers lying on the dune
Turn from each other toward the moon
And feel a tide far mightier
Than mortal love mount up to her
Who drowns in her magnetic flood
Mere urgencies of flesh and blood.
This is the hour the dying pass
Without a sigh to mist the glass,
So gently the translation made
From shadows to the world of shade.
So one who walks alone will stand
With love and death on either hand
Invisible companions who
Though cunningly disguised as two
Yet in reality are one.
Love the flesh, and death the bone.
He walks and feels the spectres glide
Along with him on either side.
And closer draws, to ward them off,
His cloak of loneliness, the stuff
Of pride, the pattern of control,
To hold them from his naked soul.
The long boardwalk lies dim before,
Across the salt marsh to the shore.
My brother Sea, how tide on tide
Your waters shift, while you abide;
From wave on wave, lost in each other,

Your undiminished voice, my brother.
My sister, Moon, how ray on ray
Is woven your unearthly day;
From ever-changing gleam and glister
Your constancy of light, my sister.
My father God, how thought on thought
Your undiscovered mind is wrought;
From love whose end is death you gather
Your everlastingness, my father.
This is the hour the heart discovers
How love is mightier than lovers,
And this the hour the dying pass
Through death and know not what it was.
And one shall stand upon the shore
And he shall ponder them no more
But dive into the sea, and swim
Far out, and peace shall go with him.



A. WOLSELEY RUSSELL

SONNET: THE OLD SONG

IF I should borrow lips from other lovers
Who sang of beauty vanished long ago,
How could I tell what now the rich heart covers
For one so living, with so quick a flow
Of present laughter? Yet if I anew
Fumble for words, I can but tell it so:
'Merry and wise is she, tender and true,'
And 'She is more fair than any lass I know.'
O, all the shepherds' pipes of Arcady,
All songs of lover-knights before they tilted,
All Solomon's enamoured melody,
And all that cavaliers ever lilted—

What more than this can any of them prove,
'She is most lovely and she is my love'?



CONRAD AIKEN

PRELUDE

AND thus Narcissus, cunning with a hand-glass,
Preening a curl, and smirking, had his say.
God's pity on us all! he cried (half laughing)
That we must die; that Lesbia's curl be lost,
And Shakespeare's wit forgotten, and the potter —
Who saw, one instant, all humanity,
And phrased its passion in a single figure —
That he be sunk in clay, and dumb as clay.

God's pity on us all! he cried and turned
The guileful mirror in a guileful light;
Smiled at the fair-curved cheek, the golden hair,
The lip, the nostril, the broad brow, the hand;
Smiled at the young bright smile. . . . Alas, alas,
To think that so great beauty should be lost!
This gold, and scarlet, and flushed ivory,
Be made a sport for worms!

But then a wonder
Deepened his gazing eyes, darkened the pupils,
Shaded his face, as if a cloud had passed.
The mirror spoke the truth. A shape he saw
Unknown before — immense, disastrous, huge —
Huge as the world, and formless. . . . Was this
he?

This dumb, tumultuous, all-including horror?
This Caliban of rocks? this steaming pit
Of foisting hells — circle on darker circle —
With worlds in rings to right and left, and other
Star-bearing hells within them, other heavens
Arched over chaos? . . .

He pondered the vast vision:
Saw the mad order, the inhuman god;
And his poor pity, with the mirror dropped,
Wore a new face: such brightness and such dark-
ness,
Unhuman, as a moon-blanced desert wears.



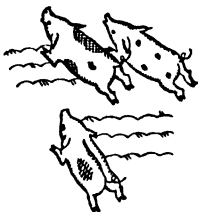
FREDERIC PROKOSCH

HALF-WISDOM

NEVER again shall I cry to the clear white stars,
Never again sing my sorrows; suddenly
I have grown wise, suddenly I have learned
Only the sea

Must weep always, always, only the hills
Must hide their aches through all eternity,
Only the stars must watch and wait forever
Relentlessly.

What are my sorrows next to these great sorrows?
I have buried them deep, I have grown brave and
strong.
Only how long will my great joys now last me,
How long?



EDMUND BLUNDEN

THE MEADOW STREAM

YOUNG joy to me is as the miser's gold,
I tell it often, but have never told.

The boy has called for his expectant friend
At the Swan yard; this day they moved to spend
In pastures, not beyond the church-tower's eyes,
But in their faith immense for enterprise.

The clock is beating nine, no time to waste,
Adventure's ceremoniousness is haste;
They take the path where lucky cherries fall,
Pass gardens where the golden marrows sprawl;
Their willow-rods ride on their shoulders, clear
Of elders damp and brambles arching here;

Before, behind, on his own interest jogs
The mongrel Bell, whose shaggy shapeless lugs
And one sharp eye protest his love of war;

And look, the pastures! Summer evermore!
Acres immeasurable, Arabian airs,
Streams with a thousand changes, reedy lairs,
Pavements of amber, cavernous recoils,
Water that sleeps, and that which sings and toils,
And feathery jungles, and strong cloistering
boughs

Where well the fugitive King might make his
house.

But kings and fairies too must take their turn;
The hunter's passion now is strong to burn;
Yet here the hunters and the hunted seem
Equally matched; the baits float down the stream,
And brilliant eyes refuse, and fins deflect,

And claim for water-spirits more respect.
One gudgeon, deigning movement, looks and nibbles,
And twenty others sleep among the pebbles;
Ambition stoops to victims of less size,
And stonefish come to land in blazing dyes,
So unexpected and so beautiful
That they live on in the small sand-wharfed pool.
And, while these there explore their bounds, the zest
For taking others has been much decreased;
Now, murmurs noonday, the most splendid flowers,
Supplied with golden light, dream silver showers;
Now what could be more sweet to boys or gods
Than that cold flash of water to which nods
The overhanging fern? Nothing more sweet;
Wave fingers at the breast make the heart beat
As though a star's white light in raindrops fell
On the bare forehead. Thus the sacred well
Is passed, and now the far root-canopy
Issues its people, swift and slippery,
Past ivory feet, and bodies light as reeds.

These are discovery's moments, and what heeds
Old Bell there, with his world of bones and rats,
Of most irreverent birds, large cows, and cats?
Panting he lies, and simulates content
Except for one lean wasp, but mark the event.
Seized by his sudden masters, down he plumbs
In the deep swim, from which he humbly comes,
And pulls, and scales the mound, and flounces free
His deluged coat, and rolls assiduously.
That done, he grins, and cordially lies down

Again, and in again his dogship's thrown.
Patiently paddling out, he climbs the shore,
Dries, creeps a little apart; perhaps once more
This thing may happen; he had best go wide,
And still be friends with distance on his side;
'Too much of water' has been cause of grief.

The air is glowing like a cankered leaf;
Thunder is on the march, his brazen shield
Waves a red horror over the free field;
He towers aloft, and holds his black brow high,
Gestures his oath in fire; the sheepfolds cry,
The trees sham dead, the young adventurers run
To find a shelter, but where offers one?
The war in heaven advances with a mass
That turns each oak into a piece of grass,
The enchanted meadow hisses rain and flame
And blackness volumes, volleys. These who came
With such wild-rosiness now palely hide,
And, when the roar is lessened, the high tide
Of violence falling back in a grey foam,
Chill and monotonous, their path is home;
There, though they know it not, the secret flowers
Of all their travelling's delighted hours,
And thence, before to-morrow's dawn, it springs
That they are one with elves and legend-kings,
That light beyond the sun's is on their skies,
And oaks, and brooks, and fishes' human eyes.

SARA TEASDALE

ALL THAT WAS MORTAL

ALL that was mortal shall be burned away,
All that was mind shall have been put to
sleep,

Only the spirit shall awake to say

What the deep says to the deep;

But for an instant, for it too is fleeting —

As on a field with new snow everywhere,
Footprints of birds record a brief alighting
In flight begun and ended in the air.

SECRET TREASURE

FEAR not that my music seems
Like water locked in winter streams;
You are the sun that many a time
Thawed those rivers into rhyme;
But let them for a while remain
A hidden music in my brain.

Unmeaning phrase and wordless measure,
That unencumbered loveliness
That is a poet's secret treasure,
Sings in me now; and sings no less
That even for your lenient eyes
It will not live in written guise.

F. R. HIGGINS

ILLÀN-NA-GILA

THERE is an isle I know where we may go in the evening,
Over the sea's white mearings, through baronies of light;
Waves brightly beckon us, a sailing wind invites us
And dream brings the isle into sight.

There light is rustled by the grasshopper in his green kingdom—
Little else stirs there, only birds or the flow'r-mating bee;
Summer grows lazy there—it merely suckles one bramble
That's reaped by a wave of the sea.

Surely it's on that isle we'll gather the airs of healing—
Dews from the dead of night to perish age and pain;
Eras of gold are seen there, to there the sunset is climbing
Down flights of yellow rain.

What, if it is a dream from Bran, Maelduin or Brandan—
Some phantom of wine and wave? Yet for it we'll brace each spar,
Climbing strange waters, and with the mind's magnetic compass
Befooled by Time's cold star!

Listen then, gentle friend, if you will sail there with
me,
Slip from the earth's green moorings and over its
cabled light,
Hailing each starboard glow, feathering our oars
. . . and softly
We'll port in a blaze of night.



VIRGINIA MOORE

LAST INSTRUCTIONS

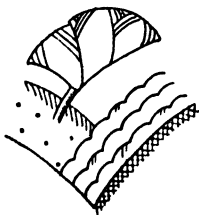
WHEN I am dead, and ashes in your hand,
In a mild Virginia meadow take your stand,
And pause a moment, thinking of the past,
Those rare road-walking days that couldn't

Think, 'This was her body that swung along with
me,
The same road, the same violets, the very locust
tree.'

Think, 'God she loved, and the witnesses of God
And in especial the Virginia sod.
Here we walked together, the wind whirled
As on the first bright morning of the world.
Hungry, tired, and tremblingly in love,
And something sang, I think a brown wood-dove.'

These thoughts will pass like summer. Pause no
more.

I shall be there as happy as before.
I shall be there to watch you turn aside
Remembering. Then fling the ashes wide.



KATHARINE TYNAN

GREEN TREES

THE mists of morning,
When morning broke,
Were as grey waters
Or doves in a flock.

No kine, slow-moving,
With breathings deep,
Nor birds were stirring,
Nor lambs nor sheep.

Grey as sea-water,
But through the grey
What green light rising
Here found its way?

Like living flambeaux
Of greenest light,
The trees appearing
So slim, so bright,

Now from the grey mists
The trees emerge,
Like green maids rising
From the ocean surge.

They light green tapers
By twos, by threes,
Like slight maids walking
Through the grey seas.

In the mists of morning,
Before the sun,
They lit green tapers
To the Holy One.

FREDERIC PROKOSCH

IT SHALL NOT MATTER

IT shall not matter whether the grey wind
Tears from its root each fragile thin-stemmed
flower

Or bends these birches low; I shall not mind
This rain that flattens hour after hour
Its drops upon this pane, or the black sea
That sends its heavy rhythm through my bones.
Only these watching stars matter to me
And the small bits of lichen on the stones.
It is these things I find at evenings after
The wildness and the storm have gone away,
After the songs, after the shouts and laughter,
After the sun has dipped behind the bay.
Always these stones will lie here, calm and still,
Always these stars will look upon this hill.



SYLVIA LYND

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

BEAUTY in your silent towers,
Tiptoeing from room to room,
What entangled thoughts were yours
Of happiness and doom?

Still to the Beast your lips said: No,
And still towards your heart love pressed
To compass reason's overthrow
And glorify a beast.

Your fountains and your painted birds,
The sparkle of your jewelled trees,
Spoke they in vain with silent words
Opposing constancies?

Did not the rose, the pretty rose,
The simple rose your heart reprove,
That was the guerdon that you chose—
Augured it such a love?

Your sisters chose a golden gown,
A necklace of the ruby red,
But you were more exacting grown:
Bring me a rose, you said.

For that pale rose your father gave
The dearest thing on earth he had—
His honour and his life to save—
You were the price he paid.

Princess of all the Fairy Tales
Utterly faithful to your word,
Whose humble duty never fails
Your father or your lord—

Was it all pleasure when the bells,
The fireworks and the joyful cries
Began, and gone were magic veils
And silent mysteries?

And those deserted rooms you trod
While fountains sparkled in the sun,
Were thronged with an obsequious crowd
Chattering everyone?

And that strange Beast you met in fear
And loved in secrecy and shame—
Was it so well when he, so dear,
Became a Prince, and tame?



ELIZABETH COATSWORTH

THE BLESSING OF THE BEDS

MAKE the bed,
And make the bed,
The sheets are smooth
And the blankets spread.

Back and forth
Round the bed we go,
I and the child
I do not know.

If it should be
A son I bear,
May he be wise
And kind and fair.

Or if a girl-child
It should be,
May the blessings on
Her bed be three.

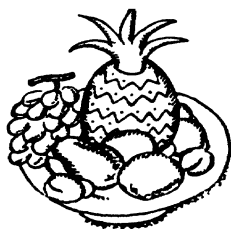
The first bed
Is the marriage-bed.
May Joy and Tenderness
Stand at its head.

And when in child-bed
She shall lie,
May Victory
Herself draw nigh.

And when at last
Comes the third bed,
May Peace bend down
Above the dead.

Ah, Love! ennoble
With my breath
Bride-bed, birth-bed
And bed of death!

*Make the bed,
And make the bed,
The sheets are smooth
And blankets spread.*



DOROTHY PARKER

TAKE MY VOWS

THEN take my vows and scatter them to sea;
Who swears the sweetest is no more than
human,
And say no kindlier words than these of me;
'Ever she longed for peace, but was a woman;
And thus are they, whose silly female dust
Needs little enough to clutter it and bind it,
Who meet a slanted gaze, and ever must
Go build themselves a soul, to dwell behind it.'
For now I am my own again, my friend!
This scar but points the whiteness of my breast;
This frenzy, like its betters, spins on end—
And now am I my own, and that is best.
Therefore, I am immeasurably grateful
To you, for proving shallow, false, and hateful.

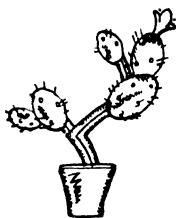


HELEN HOYT

TO HELEN OF TROY

HELEN, it is not you they have desired,
And it is not you they praise now in their songs,
But you are a thousand women and a thousand
faces,
And the glances of many eyes glance out of yours,
And the allurement of your breath
Is not the allurement of one woman that fails,
But your beauty is beauty itself,
And with that you have held men's love, their
praise.
For never are they long in the delight of one delight,
But they must taste at many springs and far rivers,
Seeking not any woman, but all womanhood.
And you are that perfection and illusion,
For they have made you after their heart's wish
And call upon you by your name, your beauty,
But 'tis not you they call—not Helen, not Helen's
face.
If you returned, would they remember your foot-
steps?
Or be more eager to look or follow after?
Or would they stop with you more than they stop
with us?
Stay then their story, and be immortal and all-
lovely,
For only yours is the beauty that can bend them
wholly.
It is the dream of love their love is constant to,
The dream of love that holds, not we that hold
them.

Only yours the beauty they let bind them un-
wearied,
And never our beauty, the binding of our single
love,
O Trojan woman who died, who never lived,
whose beauty passed,
It is only the dream of love that does not die.



L. A. G. STRONG

THE SIGHING MYSTERY

THE heifer shelters by a wall
The night before her calf is born:
The broken hill is at her back,
And at her head a thorn.

Her shaggy coat is harsh; she blows,
Rolling her weary, puzzled eyes,
Plunges and struggles, all in vain;
She cannot rest, nor rise.

A man rode up and talked to her
And left her food, but now is gone.
The western light is on the rocks,
She meets the dark alone.

Hedge, keep the sighing mystery warm,
And thorn, hold watch above,
Until a mother in the dawn
Shall lick her babe with moans of love.



WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THE DEATH OF ROBIN HOOD

THERE hangs the long bow, the strong bow,
once was bent

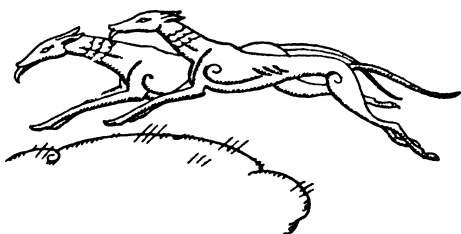
To cleave the clout, to split the willow wand;
Till the quiver's shafts were spent
The bow that wrought wild justice in this land.
The red deer, the roe deer knew that bow,
And king and clergy knew
How sure its cloth-yards flew
To right the poor and lay oppression low.

There grows our great oak, our girthed oak; over
all

The shires of England may it branch and be
As once in Sherwood, tall
As truth, and honour's ever-living tree!
The hunted and the hounded knew its ground
For refuge, knew who stood
A stiff yew hedge in the wood
Around its bole, when that the horn was wound.

Merry men all, God spare you to the hunt;
Through time it stretches, down the centuries,
Outlawed, we bore the brunt
Of the hour's disfavour, and its penalties;
Freeman, forever we with free men ride
Whenever, by God in Heaven,
They gather to make odds even!
Our souls with them they shall not fail that
tide.

Now lift me; I would see my forest walls
Badged with our colours, yea, till Time has done.
Where this last arrow falls
Sod me with turf the stag treads lightly on.
Go soft then, saying naught; but, hark yel kneel
When the evil hour would awe—
Kneel and bend bow and draw
And loose your shafts in a whistling sleet of steel!



ANTHONY BERTRAM

THE DEMI-GODS

WE can deal death more swiftly than a king,
or than a god more simply bring to birth;
bind scattered chaos in a narrow ring,
and regulate the swinging of the earth.

Helen again will walk the walls of Troy,
Egypt will love or Cæsar bleed again;
or puppets we have fashioned will destroy
the still unconquered hosts of Tamburlaine.

We span from void to void, and at our will
the proud and tattered centuries are furled
like banners out of use, but trophies still;
or seconds are made pregnant with the world.

Dreaming upon the thrones of time and space,
we stare beyond the veils of human-kind,
till on the blank of ages we can trace
the shadows of God's preconceiving mind.

Then we take words and lay them side by side
and vainly hope with these imperfect tools
that we can make an image of our pride
to feed the hungry multitude of fools.

But vision dies beneath the clumsy probe,
and history is baffled by a date:
nor can prophetic poetry disrobe
the cloaked and hooded phantom of our fate.

We are but gods within the common cell,
stretched on the living moment's senseless rack:
and every groundling rules his life as well
as Gibbon, Tolstoi, Shakespeare or Balzac.

MARY BRENT WHITESIDE

EGYPT

HERE night is a magician, careless with his tricks,
For eye and ear are too entwined with mysteries,
When sound and odour, past and present, mix.
Beside the unforgetting Nile,
And down somnolent mile on mile,
That knew Osiris and old hymns of his,
Men chant together, young and old,
Under Egyptian stars of smouldering gold,
'There is no god but Allah, and his prophet is . . .'

In Cheops' very shadow, one may sip
Pale brew of China, from an Austrian cup,
And watch dusk drink the tinted shadows up,
That cross the desert's edge, on stealthy feet, and
slip
Into the outer dark. Beneath a lemon tree,
Embowered in geraniums pink and white,
An English poet sips his tea,
And through the subtleties of changing light,
Punctures the bubble Time, to seek Eternity.



JESSICA NELSON NORTH

THE BURDEN

THE night is full of the immense surprise
Of women growing older.
The night straddles the prairie, Atlas-wise,
And shifts to the other shoulder
That burden of weeping.

Are the women sleeping?

Now on the river bank the voices say
Under the new moon, the first star,
'How beautiful, how beautiful you are!'

The voices murmur, the voices rise and float:
'A kiss for your throat,
For your left breast, for your right, for your arms.
Cover them—keep them warm.'

The moon rides and the stars follow after.
At midnight the river wind blows colder.
The voices die away to a still laughter.

But the women lie awake in the dark and stare.
The night supports the incredulous despair
Of women growing older.

JAMES RORTY

WHITE-FACE

HARD times, hard times, hard times for White-face!

White-face is God's fool, White-face turns accomplished toes around the rolling balls of things as they are.

White-face is sane, White-face is honest, White-face gets fifteen per cent., White-face is caught in the trap of his own miracle.

Too many loaves? Too many fishes? White-face will save us, watch

How his shrewd knout whips the greed of the ravening multitudel

Onward, onward, faster, faster, wheels, wheels, wheels!

The hoop-snake swallows his tail, gentlemen!
This engine runs on credit—just one quart of synthetic future, keep moving, you can't stop here!

Once White-face stood with folded arms on the rolling ball called Destiny!

I saw the strange indifferent winds from beyond the world billowing the tent of the greatest show on earth;

I saw White-face fall as the Guard met thundering death on the field of Waterloo.

I saw the great ball roll away, and a dozen White-faces scramble to mount it; I heard ten thousand devils shouting,

'White-face is dead! Long live White-face!'

Yesterday, White-face bestrode the schoolmaster's
globe-map of the world so well they made
him President.

White-face, the foot juggler, in scholar's cap and
gown balancing the rolling ball of history.

The ball bursts into flame. Quick, White-face,
put out the fire!

Brave White-face, proud White-face, too proud to
fight! . . .

White-face is afraid. White-face can't stop. Faster,
faster, force without stint! Ships, guns,
soldiers, war, war—war to end war! . . .

White-face in the fool's cap of victory. White-face
with death in his eyes and death taking the
tall body by inches,

Peace, White-face, peace without victory.

Once White-face was not afraid.

Once White-face rode up to Jerusalem and the
great ball rolled joyously before him.

The scribes and the pharisees were afraid; White-
face was not afraid.

Lazarus rose, the evil spirits departed, the blind saw;
Who walks in the joined armour of life-and-death,
him you cannot crucify.

Who conquers Time, what Cæsar shall compass
his kingdom?

The Virgin's strange lover, the invisible betrayer,
was it not Death who came, that the son of
man might live?

Life is the lone and barren tree, death the great bee
buzzing in the orange flowers.

Two tides, one ocean; on these waters you must
walk, White-face; on this sea none shall perish.

BARBARA YOUNG

REQUIESCAT

HOW good the brief dusk is, and the long night.
How good the late slow dawn and the mellow
noon.

There seems a gentle hushing in the air,
A stillness that is almost like a voice.

Rake the brown leaves and hear the russet sound
They make in turning. It is like a song,
Not like a sigh. There is no grieving in them
To find their bedtime near. The summer's heat,
The greenness and the passionate alchemy
That changed the green to gold—these things are
over,

And there is come a respite and a calm
After the vivid haste of harvesting.

The tree is innocent of burdens now;
Nor leaf nor fruit remains, nor any care
Save the dark ecstasy of being free.
There is no wailing in the grey stripped branches
For fallen loveliness. There is no cry
For lost bright birds. There is no moan at all
For the departed richness of the days,
Taking the rough winds with a gracious will,
Bending, that thus his boughs shall not be broken,
The forest girds his loins for wintertime.

The seasons of the earth are fair and fine,
And all things must know silence for a space,
Silence and darkness. Even so, the heart
Shall come upon December afterwhile,
That goodly benediction of the year;
And cold and snow shall bed the wasting dreams
And nourish up their beauty and their grace
Against the certain coming of their May.

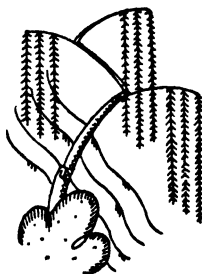
ALFRED KREYMBORG

DESTROY A DAY

DESTROY a day and you destroy an immortal
ring,
And each small crawling prayer when you are old
Can never bring a thing as fair out of the wintry
mould
Of earth to rise to your side and sing.

I've known a doting girl and boy whose pulses ran
So many frenzied miles ahead of a mortal plan,
Ill-tempered words led to a word among dark trees,
Scattered their lives along the tide where lone
things freeze.

Ah for a passionate heart and head in unison,
The dual genius night and day of moon and sun:
If youth and truth had only rhymed in time,
She might have said, he might have said instead
What is now too late to say—and oh how dead.

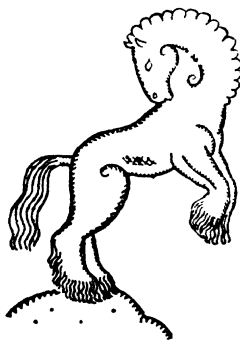


W. H. DAVIES

LOVE LIGHTS THE FIRE

LOVE lights his fire to burn my Past—
There goes the house where I was born!
And even Friendship—Love declares—
Must feed his previous flames and burn.

I stuffed my life with odds and ends,
But how much joy can Knowledge give?
The World my guide, I lived to learn
From Love, alone, I learn to live.



ANDERSON M. SCRUGGS

CHRISTMAS 1930

HOW can they honour Him, the humble lad
Whose feet struck paths of beauty through
the earth,
With all the drunken revelry, the mad
Barter of goods that marks His day of birth?
How can they honour Him with flame and din,
Whose soul was peaceful as a moon-swept sea,
Whose thoughts were sombre with the world's
great sin
Even while He trod the hill to Calvary?

I think if Jesus should return and see
This hollow blasphemy, this day of horror,
The heart that languished in Gethsemane
Would know again as great and deep a sorrow,
And He who charmed the troubled waves to sleep
With deathless words, would kneel again and weep.

MARGARET EMERSON BAILEY

WHITE CHRISTMAS

THIS is December, and zero weather;
This is the season of less, not more.
But better get ready the empty manger,
Pitchfork straw on the draughty floor.

A pretty time for a cow to be calving.
What does she think will become of her young?
But bolt the door from the flying snowflakes,
Slam it to where the sill has sprung.

Am I to fetch clover as I fetch water,
With ice on the pasture, ice on the sedge?
But though cold as a barn, this needn't be colder.
Stuff an old shirt in the window ledge.

You'd think she'd know there was nothing to grow
on;
That frosty hay is poor fodder for milk.
But lift the oil lamp to the furthest corner—
Eyes like stars and a coat like silk.

Where has the heart of winter a warm spot
For any creature so newly born?
But look at the milk-white breath of the cattle,
The warm white breath of the lowing cattle,
Taking off the chill of Christmas morn.

LEONORA SPEYER

CITY SQUARE

OVER the Square
A yellow moon
Swings high;
Looks down on the town
From a mellow sky.

Spring will be soon!

A hundred sparrows take the air;
Fidget and flutter
Along the bare bough.

Spring is now! Spring is now!

And I hear
A bent crone mutter,
Walking alone
(Greed in her eyes,
On her mouth a fear),

Spring is late this year!

Over the Square
In utterance even,
A tower counts seven;
A hundred sparrows take the air.

JOHN HALL WHEELLOCK

THE LETTER

THE night is measureless, no voice, no cry
Pierces the dark in which the planet swings —
It is the shadow of her bulk that flings
So deep a gloom on the enormous sky;
This timorous dust, this phantom that is I
Cowers in shelter, while the evening brings
A sense of mystery and how all things
Waver like water and are gliding by.

Now, while the stars in heaven like blowing sand
Drift to their darkness, while oblivion
Hushes the fire of some fading sun,
I turn the page again — and there they stand,
Traced by love's fleeting but victorious hand,
The words: 'My darling, my beloved one.'



GEOFFREY JOHNSON

OTHERWORLD

THIS is the night of all the nights, this one:
Rome, Babylon, Athens, Ilion
Shine with resurgent towers as once they shone.

By the bold magic of the moon they share
This otherworld of shadowy selfhood, where
Sulpicia sighs and Cressid combs her hair,

Hearing the cocks that will not sleep for hours
Hurling their shrilling crystal in high showers,
Like fountains re-arisen to the towers.

So wide the honey-coloured moon is strown,
All the lost harvests which the world has known
Rise in Elysian multitudes; and blown

In rapture, bees unperishing soar and change
To swarms of golden stars that burn and range
Through cloudy deeps of clematis far and
strange. . . .

Oh let Sleep's heavy curtains wide be flung,
And through Arcadian valleys hollow-hung
Let your dreams wander — there the world is young.

LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE

THE PERFECT THING

FROM the sun low in sky,
From the wind that blows
In the grizzled east,
Can I get me a rose?

The lane shakes its head,
The garden says nay;
Black to its roots
The briar by the way.

From a Cairo shop,
Or a Turin fair,
Or a coster's cart
In a London square?

From the fool down the road,
Or the solemn king
In a leafless wood,
Can I get me this thing?

From a witch's house
At the world's end,
Five petals or more
Of scarlet to spend?

I would sell my roofs;
I would trade my lands;
I would pour my heart's blood
For a rose in my hands.

JANE CULVER

TO KATHERINE MANSFIELD

I PRESSED my hand behind the shape of yours,
And hoped that I might trace the summer sky
For which you carved the clouds and blent the dye;
I hoped that in a secret place you'd known
I'd touch the vine that winds to warm the stone.

This hand will never bend to those contours
So delicately wrought, so sharply fine,
That carved the cloud and shaped the greenest vine.
These fingers, whittled from a coarser bone,
Shall trace the empty sky, the frozen stone.



E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF MME. ANNA PAVLOVA

THE glory and the ardour of the stage,
The dazzling feet that made a mock of death,
The exultation, the delicious rage,
Are cast upon the chilly morning's breath.

Terpsichore, with unreverted glance,
Stands by the flower-piled burden of the hearse;
Her eyes bent earthward, agonized Romance
Regrets the sharp fulfilment of Time's curse.

The tender-shod and rapid whirling Loves
Lay their extinguished flambeaux on the bier;
The silent Aphrodite of the groves
Accords her parsley wreath with step severe.

The ghosts of ancient dancers gather now,
The nameless figures on Hellenic bowls,
The wry Satyric masque, the votive cow,
And the nude leaper o'er the teamèd foals.

The buskined act of Proserpine and Dis
Revolves around thy tomb with motion staid;
Septentrio, boy of Antipolis,
Lays a light Roman tress where thou art laid.

Camargo, poised between the violins
(Moving immovable, by Lancret's art),
Forth from her canvas, unregarded, spins,
And with the mourning meinie bears her part.

Vestris, and Taglioni, and the pride
Which Spain allowed America to draw,
That Carmencita of the saffron stride,
Revere the vanished proof of Beauty's law.

Vanished the magic of Armida's bower,
Vanished the Butterflies in gilded chase,
Vanished the maiden with the Rose's dower,
The Rose whose Phantom Time shall ne'er efface.

Vanished the Bacchanal, the autumn rite,
The vintage-frenzy, Paganism's birth,
When hand and hair and leaf seemed one mad
flight,
And Earth upleapt in joy that she was Earth.

Vanished the veering marvel of the Swan,
Vitaly borne unto the bank to die,
Who orb'd her feathers to a snow-white fan,
Ere massed against the rushes with no sigh.

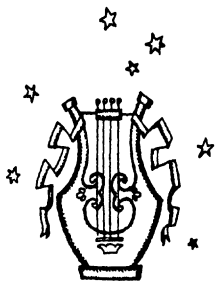
She is not dead, the Mistress of the Mime;
Her power throbs in our souls, energetic, warm,
Unwithered by the cynic touch of Time,
Inalienable, 'yond human harm.

In her we saw the Being, not the bird,
The rapture of a Spirit uncreate;
Less in the flutes than in those feet we heard
The pride that lifts men far above their fate.

She swam into our cramped and single lives
Ere War had fused them to a complex pain,
Ere yet we knew the Destiny that drives
All empires to one democratic main.

Ere yet the crowns of Kaiser and of Czar
Were forced into the fierce communal mould,
Ere yet we had exchanged our native star
For dictates of a rule, self-centred, cold.

Yea, Pavlova, thy reign is regal yet;
As all fair deeds endure, so this endures.
It is not meet our eyes should long be wet;
Thy grace, thy memory, exalts, secures.
In the wild hour when not a planet burns,
And faith in mortals is a flower forspent,
The moon of pagan ecstasy returns,
And feeds the night with faery nutriment.



SARAH-ELIZABETH RODGER

AND IF I CRY RELEASE . . .

I

THE thought of you is spray against my face,
Wind in my eyes, unmerciful and sweet;
And I can feel the pulse of marching feet
Stir down the years, race following proud race.
Words you have spoken wake me and, in waking,
The night becomes a beauty burdensome;
I cannot sleep for hearing the long drum
Of waves on alien rock, beating and breaking.
They are a song your eyes call out from me,
Like courage born of bold blue flags unfurled,
Like tall firs struck from such a little spark—
But break my dream of you, and it will be
As moon into splinters, as my clear white world
Blotted into a sudden, desperate dark.

II

And if I cry release, it is not I
Essentially. It is a coward woman
Too shy and small, too miserably human
To face you shoulder to shoulder, eye to eye;
Yet deep within me you may find a thing
As stern and tall as you, as old, as wise,
An Atlas capable of all the skies
You put on her, without murmuring.
Do not despise me when I turn aside;
Looking at you is looking into light
Too long and too intently, and in fright
I turn—and wonder what has suddenly died . . .
And turn to you again, and catch my breath
In belief of you and disbelief of death.

III

It is not happiness to think of you,
Nor is it peace, but transient ecstasy;
It is the moon when it is thin and new
And sharply silver in eternity.
My eyes are wide with it, my cheeks are wet,
And it will blow by, blow by . . . oh my dear,
I may be gone from here, I may forget,
And fall to soberness with earth too near;
There is no grave to hold the thin new moon,
No stone to mark its passing in the sky,
Only the stars' faint tumult, gone too soon
As the sane sun lifts insolent and high.
And lest my keen young grief turn querulous
sorrow,
Let there be no more moons and no to-morrow.

IV

These are the moments we have snatched from
Time
By some frail wisdom in our lips and hands;
The hour-glass is low, the stubborn sands
Sift in their rhythm. All that is sublime
Pulses within us to a sombre end;
And I am fearful counting beat by beat
The footsteps of the stranger in our street
Who peers at us around the sudden bend.
These are the moments, tenuous and high,
And lest I seek to draw them out too long,
And lest I slur the last note of the song,
Oh, hold me closely, say the lovely lie,
And then have done. The little rapture slips
To nothing, even underneath your lips.

VIOLA GERARD GARVIN

AU CLAIR DE LA LUNE

PIERROT, lend me your pen,
For I would write
Of love, that he is star-like . . .
But that the night,
Being so cool, so velvet-dark,
Is kind
To the tired heart,
To the love-weary mind.

Alack! the flame is out,
That lit my way
Up the steep path,
From the first golden day;
Dark night, that blessed,
Fulfil me now with fear. . . .
Pierrot, open your door,
Love is here.

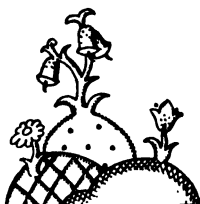


ANDERSON M. SCRUGGS

ONLY THE DREAM IS REAL

ONLY the dream is real. There is no plan
Transcending even a rose's timid glory,
A cricket's summer song. The ways of man
Are stupors of the flesh, and transitory.
There is no truth but dreams, yet man must spend
His gift of quiet days in storm and stress,
Unheeding that a single breath will end
With one swift stroke the hoax of worldliness.

Only the dream will last. Some distant day
The wheels will falter, and the silent sun
Will see the last beam levelled to decay,
And all man's futile clangour spent and done.
Yet, after brick and steel and stone are gone,
And flesh and blood are dust, the dream lives on.



LADY MARGARET SACKVILLE

DAFFODILS

GAY daffodils,
In you we see
Spring's white and curious
Alchemy.

Who strangely mingles
Fire and snow:
Ice on the surface,
Flame below.

Fierce runs her secret
Fire within
Your pale, transparent
Petal skin;

Fire transformed
And innocent
Turned at a touch
To sap and scent.

KAY BOYLE

HUNT

the buckhounds went on under the rain
with the wet fern swinging lace over their eyes
and their skins hanging like crumpled velvet

the bucks shod with leaves like sandals
danced on chopsticks over the suey of red lizards,
white stalks and caterpillars

the gentlemen slapped with their crop-butts at
their clean leather

now the gentlemen turn back out of the high drip-
ping world
to fires that repeat themselves in the copper of
andirons and whisky glasses

with the throats of the buckhounds sunk over
their insteps
and the hound teats bruised blue on the fine floor.



STELLA GIBBONS

THE WAKEFUL SWANS

A STILL, dark night of Spring
Broods on the sleeping lake
And the nesting swans,
The ghostly, cruising swans,
Alone are awake.

Listen . . . Their restless breasts
Ripple the oily tide.
Like sighs in the dark,
Like fallen clouds in the dark
They loiter and glide,
Breaking the streaks of gold
The windows throw on the lake.

Lingering on the bridge,
By the budding sedge on the bridge,
I, too, am awake.

I breathe the air of Spring,
The hesitant straying air,
An uneasy sigh in the night
Brushing my cheek in the night,
Stirring my hair—

While the same restlessness
That drives the swans to and fro
Drifts and flares in my heart,
Lifts and falls in my heart.

But the swans cannot know
I share their vague distress.

In our two worlds, we beat
Our wings in the face of Spring
And would pierce the heart of Spring,
But our worlds can never meet.

J. C. SQUIRE

IN THE WOODS IN NOVEMBER

MEN, guns and dogs: the temperate sun —
In cheerful friendliness
We walked the woods and copses
Decked in their autumn dress
From beat to beat: but, if they saw,
How could those others guess?
How know, when secretly I smiled
Though nothing had been said:
Your presence drifted by the path;
How know my even tread
Was light as air, and ecstasy
Lit all my heart and head?
Dreaming, I could not tell as through
The lovely world I went,
Or which was world or which was you:
O sight and sound and scent!
My spirit knew her native joy
And sang in ravishment.
For there were shades and gleams of you
In all the earth and air,
In every bending birch your grace
Came on me unaware,
In every drift of autumn leaves
The colour of your hair.
The gentle rays of sunshine
That lit each sunken glade
Were like the crooked glances
Beneath your eyelids shade,
So trembling and so tender,
So soft, so unafraid.

And shadowed by these drooping veils
And branching tracteries
Were old dark rotten leaves that paved
The sweet limpidities
Of little secret woodland pools,
And there I saw your eyes.

But once as though by magic,
Born of my blissful mood,
A visionary visitant
Your very self, you stood,
A Dryad poised and motionless
In the middle of the wood.

Fragile and clean and virginal,
Still as a startled doe,
You looked as from a place apart
On me who paused below:
O twin small apple-blossom breasts!
O limbs with light aglow!

Your haloed hair was fiery
As autumn's cohorts are,
Your scarlet lips were parted,
Your hands were wide and far,
Your eyes they gazed as though you came
Strange, from another star.

There as I watched you vanished,
The shining ghost was gone,
The empty glade was Dryadless,
Though radiance clung thereon:
And all day long within my heart
Unearthly beauty shone.

ALFRED NOYES

A BALLADE OF BOYHOOD

SHIPS, long salted with the spray,
Welter at our tarry quays.
Younger hands their anchors weigh
Now for the unaltering seas.
Masts that tower like red-wood trees
Creak: the windlass cranks the chain;
Then—that rush of memories!
Would I were a boy again!

Blue as Hybla, blithe as may,
Hills of thyme, alive with bees,
Lift above the land-locked bay
Cliffs for boyhood's tattered knees;
Crag where eaglets crouch at ease,
Watching, off the Spanish Main,
Skulls and cross-bones on the breeze.
Would I were a boy again!

Hoiſt your sails: away! away!
Steer for any port you please,—
Lost Atlantis, far Cathay,
Isles of the Hesperides.—
All their whispering wizardries
Waſte like foam to one refrain
Nothing ſhall your hearts appease.
Would I were a boy again!

*Prince, the heaven that none could ſeize
Lies before us. Not in vain
Every moment as it flees
Brings us nearer heaven again.*

ALFRED NOYES

ESCAPE

AFTER long searching through a thousand
volumes,
After the questioning of a thousand sages,
And a most careful listening to their answers,
I quietly turned away,
Crumpling into a pellet the scrap of paper
On which I had noted down a score of phrases
That seemed a little more luminous than the rest.

Then, rowing across the lake with my dear love,
I moored my boat,
Close to an island, under a wise old willow,
And tossed that pellet of truth,
That scrap of paper,
And all those answers,
Away to a hungry duckling;
Who, taught by nature to waste no time on the
abstract,
Swam round it quickly, ogled it with suspicion,
Observed that it was not bread,
Not even a crumb,
And haughtily paddled away.

And there I laid my head on my love's heart,
And we looked up at the sky, between dark
boughs,
And watched a bird
With a wisp of moss in his beak,
Helping his mate to build.

The wisdom of books . . .
Plato, Plotinus, drifted away like a cloud.
And I lay still,
Rapt by the infinite mystery of the world
In an ecstasy of wonder; wonder at life;
Wonder at death; wonder at Space and Time,
The flow of colours and forms wherein we floated,
Reflecting and reflected,
Hearing the ripple of that miraculous water,
With those two rustling birds at their strange task,
Among miraculous leaves that quietly whispered
Their secret wisdom in the miraculous air,
Whispering all away but the whisper of love.



NANCY CAMPBELL

THE CHILD

I

O GOD, what pride and power
Lie here, wrapt in a shawl.
For you, and such as you
Ancestry laboured—

All its works and thoughts and arts
Would have been worthless wanting you.

All our works and thoughts and arts
Will pass, accepted or dismissed
Before you.

Little and helpless, lying in my lap,
You, and such as you, will take the world
And twist it to a plan
We never dreamed of—

The Kingdom of God is come a little nearer
By your birth.

II

Happy the house

That goes a tip-toe when the evening comes,
And says 'Hush, hush,
He sleeps.'

Happy the house that may not lie too long
Of mornings—

Little cries of hunger and of laughter
Rousing it. Tiny imperious fingers
Pushing up its eyes.

Happy that house—its heart is beating to the
heart of earth,
The sap of earth is running in its veins.

III

Now I am like the earth—

I can give food.

And you, my little son,

Look to me only.

We are so little separate, you and I,

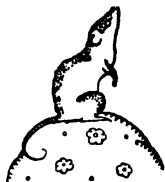
Still your growth comes of me,

And my strength makes you strong.

Now am I like the earth,

I can give birth to flowers,

And nourish them.



RUTH LECHLITNER

DIRGE FOR CIVILISATION

HERE is a man dying. He has been caged in
stone,
Paying starvation with a beggar's penny
Too many years. A few more cannot matter.
He was young once, and being young, a poet—
Wondered about stars and questioned life and
dreamed
Of something that might be beautiful. Now
Only his shadow remembers.

Better the beast
That lusts hot-flanked and, velvet-footed, kills;
Better the savage lazy in the forest
Who earns no wage and laughs under the sun;
Better the child naked; the woman whose mouth
is red
And whose breast will not be forgotten.

Here is a man dying. It is a long time since
He has felt rage or pleasure or desire
Burn in his veins. The flesh has lost its meaning,
The tongue its taste. Nor does he remember
When rivers and green hills slipped from his sight
Into the shadow. The stalk of the red flower,
Beauty, is broken, and he does not care.

Here is a man dying. All day he sits
In a steel cage with others. He makes money.
He is methodical, he markets flesh, and buries
Under corruption in the name of law
The corpse of love. In his steel cage he sits
Fat with conformity—complacent, civilised.

Better the beast snarling, the sun-dark savage
Building his jeu-jeu against evil spirits;
The weeping child afraid of the dark; the woman
Giving her body to a faithless lover.

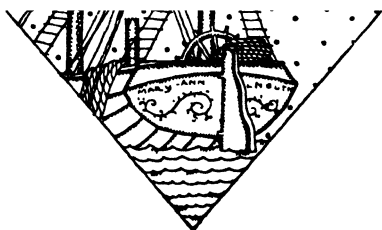
Time laughs in his sleeve. There is no reason
Why we should take the matter seriously. But
Here is a stone cage with ribs of steel,
— And here is a man dying.



THOMAS CALDECOT CHUBB

THE LAUNCHING OF A SHIP

THE stalwart sound of mauls all winter long
Rang sturdily in chorus, till one day
The scaffolding and the frames were stripped away,
And there she stood as graceful as a song,
Yet with her bluff, square bow, less graceful than
strong,
Fanned by the restless breezes of late May,
Above the hush of an anticipant throng
Poised till she plunge into the rustling bay,
With her slow pride of queenly dignity,
At last she started down the sloping ways,
And as she moved there came a shout of praise
That had two thousand voices' unity,
From men who, having no other poetry,
Made her as strong a song as men need raise.



A. R. UBSDELL

NIGHT PIECE

DIMMED are the flowers now,
And no birds sing
From the gnarled bough
Where apples swing.

No more the impish
Cloud-shadows play
Where silver fish
In mirrors lay.

And overhead
From unseen skies
Ring owls' instead
Of curlews' cries.

Dew-shimmering clings
The gossamer
Where jewel-spun wings
And bees' feet were.

Only a far song
Tells how passes
The wind among
The marram grasses.

The firmament
That gemmed the lawn
Ere the sun spent
His light, has gone

To star those heights
As he had done, . . .
A million lights
To shine for one.

MARIE DE L. WELCH

BUD AND LAMB

SPRING is not soft, it is not gentle,
It is not a season of light song;
If you find this bud and this lamb gentle
You are blind, you are wrong.

They are lovely, to see them is to have new eyes -
But they are not gentle, they have broken away,
By marvellous violence from the close womb;
They triumph, they are not softly gay.

Winter only is the season of gentleness
When the seed and the sheep
Nurture the tempest of another spring
In stillness and sleep.



ALISTER MACKENZIE

A FAR COUNTRY

I SEE a look upon her face
I cannot bear to see,
A look that hurries her away
Into a far country,
Into a country far and strange,
While she sits here with me.

I stood beside a dark river
That moved within its bed,
And darkness stood on either hand,
And darkness overhead—
I only heard the river move,
And I knew that I was dead.

On either hand the darkness stood,
But there was plain to hear
The tread of feet went softly by
And voices low and clear;
But I was dead to what they said
For all that they were near.

And with that look upon her face
I cannot bear to see—
A look that hurries her away
Into a far country,
Into a country far and strange—
My dream comes back to me.

LESLIE NELSON JENNINGS

HOOR OF THE LIZARD

NOW is the hour when yellow eyes relax
Their watchfulness and lizards bask unseen,
Wearing the colour of dust upon their backs,
While a hawk sentinels the dry ravine.
The pulse of noonday pauses on a beat
Of panting somnolence, unroused by one
Poor ghost of shade that fled on burning feet —
Only the sky, the sagebrush, and the sun.

And if the lizard find another use
For this implacable, consuming hour,
Giving for all his mask of sleep, no truce
To any midge below the cactus flower,
How can we think the desert sand would be
Less treacherous, less vigilant than he?



EDWIN MUIR

AFTER THE FALL

WHAT shape had I before the Fall?
What hills and rivers did I seek?
What were my thoughts then? And of what
Forgotten histories did I speak

To my companions? Did our eyes
From their fore-destined watching place
See Heaven and Earth one land, and range
Therein through all of Time and Space?

Did I see Chaos and the Word,
The suppliant dust, the moving Hand,
Myself, the Many and the One,
The changing and the unchanging Land?

That height cannot be scaled again.
My fall was like the fall that burst
Old Lear's heart on the summer sward.
Where I lie now I stood at first.

Yet the old pain returns anew:
What was I ere I came to man?
What shape among the shapes that once
Age-long through endless Eden ran?

The countless worlds of sport and play
When my armorial comrades were
The low-browed voiceless animals:
What sights and shapes did I see there?

Did I see there the dragon brood
By streams their emerald scales unfold,
While from their amber eyeballs flowed
Soft-rayed the rich and rustling gold?

It must be that one time I walked
By rivers where the dragon drinks;
But this side Eden's gate I meet
On every twisting road the Sphinx;

Whose head is like a wooden prow
That forward leaning dizzily
Over the seas of whitened worlds
Has passed and nothing found to see;

Whose breast, a flashing ploughshare, once
Cut the rich furrows wrinkled in
Venusberg's sultry underworld,
And busy trampled fields of sin;

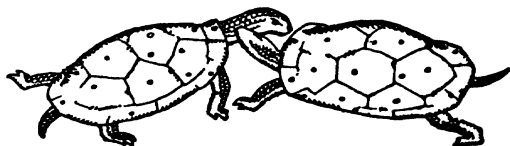
Whose salt-white brow like crusted fire
Smiles ever, whose cheeks are red as blood;
Whose dolphin back is flowered yet
With wrack that swam upon the Flood.

Since then in antique attitudes
I swing the bright two-handed sword,
And smite the marble smiling brow,
Wide-eyed and watchful as a bird;

Smite hard between the basilisk eyes,
And carve the snaky dolphin side,
Until the coils are cloven in two,
And free the glittering pinions glide.

Like quicksilver the scales slip down,
Up through the air the spirit flies,
And so I build me Heaven and Hell
To buy my bartered Paradise.

While from a legendary height
I watch a shadowy figure fall,
And not far off another beats
With his bare hands on Eden's wall.



ROBERT L. ROE

SEAS AND SINGING COUNTRY
(Across the south-west by 'bus)

*I*NDIAN fingers,
Sinewy red Indian fingers,
Grip my brain—
They will not let me go. . . .
Nigger fingers,
Fingers of the dark lands
Black and relaxed,
Lie on my heart
Like old songs,
Like old memories . . .

The white men crowd the coast and the coast towns;
Piled masonry and straight streets, and between them
The sea glints and the sea mists drifting outward
And returning to the shore hills, shredding among
the pines,

and the redwoods
fogging the gulches;
And the kelp smell and the rotten odour of fish, the
decaying
Sea-trash and the reduction plants stinking up the
sky . . .

The white men are glad to sit
With their backs to the shore hills covered with
grass,
sea-burnt
with the salt wind.

They have the sea glint in their eyes, and the sea
Is a way of escape—to Europe, to lands
That are still in their hearts, lands that they under-
stand:

the fair fields of France
and the hedges of England,
quiet and orderly,
sedately marking the seasons.

They cannot yet understand the deep land of
America—

It is not in their blood or their bones or their hearts;
The boiling cauldrons of the Yellowstone, chasms
of Colorado,

The plains vast and illimitable; and the tule swamps;

The Rockies sitting down on the land like im-
measurable beasts with sad eyes,

Looking over the long land, the brown sunburnt
land—

heatstruck
sunstruck
and silent—

Still in the grip of the sinewy, the red Indian fingers.

*Nigger fingers,
Fingers of the dark land,
Lie on my heart
Like old songs,
Like old memories.
Sing yourselves, songs!
Tell yourselves, memories!
What has a white man got to do with
you?*

T. O. BEACHCROFT

EMBLEM TO BE CUT ON A LONELY ROCK AT SEA

HERE no spring breaks,
No warmth the barren stone unlocks;
No herbs, grasses nor such green thing breaks
Through the iron rocks.
Here no roots hold
No fruits to bear,
But year by year
No season of living or dying can be told
Here.

Pause now upon the creaking oar,
And let the weeping sail relax.
The vessel stirred with life no more
Shall gybe and shudder in her tracks,
While wreaths of seaweed red and brown
Swell on the water, and sink down.
Hark, the lamenting winds pass by
From Nature's bosom breathed
Sigh after sigh.
And heavy exhalations wreathed
With salt and vapour in the air
Cast misty drops into the beard and hair.
No voice except the sullen warning bell
Rising and falling on the off-shore swell.

Oh sepulchre of sound, what news for men?
When shall this earth be glad again?

Ah when!

Or know the glory that was hers before?
No more, alas! Alas, ah never more!

THOMAS HORNSBY FERRIL

LINCOLN MEMORIAL

WHEN you look at Abraham Lincoln sitting
there,

A stone Kentuckian umbered in Hellas,
Can you hear the muscle chant of the Asian slaves
Tugging the sun from the sea before the sunrise?
Do you stare an hour against the blue Ægean
Waiting more timber cutters out of Egypt
To sing the lamentation of their meadows
Into the fluting of their Parian marble?

The marble blocks are moon blocks olive-silvered.
Patience! The slaves are overdue from Samos;
Four ships to-morrow from our four-cited Chios!
The blood of helots cools along the levers,
The salt of helots stiffens in the coils
Of rope binding the cylinders of stone;
The muscle chant is moon-set in the lime.

When you look at Abraham Lincoln sitting in
A house the sea-slaves builded long ago,
Do you turning stare beyond the wide green trees,
Over the roofs, the singing distances
Where the prairies are, and the rivers and the
mountains?

Do you say with a whisper crossing many rivers:
America, are there no visible forms
Of beauty risen from your earth to which
These dead have gone and those who led them
down?

Is only the chant of slaves too beautiful?
Only their agony to be repeated?

DORIS PAILTHORPE

THE SECRET

WHY, this must be the selfsame sun
That shone for Villon, Marvell, Donne;
The very sky that Shakespeare knew;
The wind, the air that Dante drew.

Did leaves as full of whispers sound
When Webster walked with eyes on ground?
Shone daisies so in dewy grass
Where Chaucer's roving foot did pass?

Then, if their suns no brighter were
Than ours, their moons no lovelier,
What beauty drove their pens, that we
Search after still, but seldom see?



DAVID MORTON

SPRING THOUGHT

NOW . . . the slow curve of thought
Turns upward with the bough,
It straightens and is wrought
Of blossoms . . . now,

Shines . . . and is strange and still,
It strains against the sky,
Sweet and confused of will:
To stay . . . to fly . . .

Loving the earth, and fond
As root-things are,
Yet all but off, beyond
The last white star;

Not knowing what it seeks . . .
And words, when they come,
Are blossoms, and it speaks
Like apple or plum.



ROBERT NICHOLS

THE SOULS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

'The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God.'—
Wisdom III.

On May 31, 1916, the *Nestor*, destroyer, led her Division in a brilliant attack upon the German battle cruisers off Jutland. Her officers included Commander the Hon. Barry Bingham (awarded the V.C. for gallantry in this action), commanding; Lieutenant Maurice Bethell, First Lieutenant (killed in this action); Engineer Commander Norman Roberts (killed in this action); and Sub-Lieutenant Dudley Rowe (awarded the D.S.O. for gallantry in this action). The poem opens at the moment when the *Nestor* found herself lying disabled while the opposed battle cruisers, 'furiously engaged,' disappeared north-west.

SO death had passed them by. And *Nestor* lay
Crippled, the while nor westward crept away
The cannonade—as when on Jura hills
Brief stormshine brightens over bleachen ghylls
And, while the rowan sparkles against gloom
More purple than the billowing heather's bloom,
The ebbing thunder, though it shake the air,
But makes the dazzled wanderer more aware
Of sweetness and silence and the whispering tones
Of rivulets wandering among winking stones.

They had done well—had pressed home their attack,
Scattered the foe destroyers from their track,
Closed on his battle cruisers' blasting wrath
And flung their javelins athwart his path
Ere, skulking from behind the German van,
A foe light cruiser, as the *Nestor* ran,
Had surged and struck and, writhing round, been
gone

Or ever a speeding sight could be swung on.
Nestor, hard hit, in agony extreme,
Had held her course albeit roaring steam
Embosomed her and revolutions dropped,
Till, quivering faintly yet, she had faltered, rolled
and stopped.

Then to the gallant *Petard*, offering tow,
Nestor, more gallant yet, had answered *No*;
Bingham 'lacked right' he thought 'to hazard
both,'
And Thompson in *Petard* had swung off—twice
loth.

Now, fearfully havocked in the boiler-room,
Nestor made stubborn shift to outwit her doom.
Time was what most she needed—and most lacked.
'She should limp home, sir, if she's not attacked,'
Thus Roberts, quiet of eye and terse of tongue,
Upon his reeking ladder's topmost rung,
The post at which so soon he was to die.

A miracle!—yes: so Death had passed them by.
Had passed them by. . . . Upon the horizon's
rim

Bingham beheld the ponded smoke dislimn
Pure, pale and peaceful, comfortably bright
Even as honour earned in well-fought fight
That rim became . . . and oh, how sweetly shone
The sun's bleak eye now *Nestor's* share was done!
Further and further rolling, stole away
The gloomy rumour of that phantom fray
Till soundless it became and seemed a mere
Tremor about the heart, not in the ear.

Now in the silence two sole sounds arose:
 The *Nestor's* din of steam and hammer blows
 And that din's seeming echo on the sea—
 Where, two miles west and wallowing listlessly,
Nomad, the *Nestor's* fellow venturer lay
 Struck, hissing, hammering in the self-same way.
 There let these, labouring in desperate case,
 Hope as the desperate can a little space
 While in far England on this last of May
 The brown bee fumbles among apple-spray,
 Pale as the clouds and stiller even than they,
 While the blind grandfer in his orchard chair
 Drowzes and stirs and wonders vaguely where
 That thunder is, then calls 'Hey, come at once,
 Mary, my girl,—I think I hear them guns—'
 But, no one coming, sighs and smiles and nods,
 'Mebbe it's only fancy—what's the odds?
 Thunder more likely or them mumbling bees,
 Expecting thunder, in the apple trees';
 Or, in the paradise of a garden close,
 Where the last tulip flames by the first rose,
 Some stripling daughter of a fighting man—
 Of one of these perhaps—tiptoes to scan
 The dial's shadow on the patient square,
 Tiptoes indeed as if afraid to scare
 Time's ghostly shadow from the dial's face,
 Yet marks no obdurate fraction of Time's race
 Because in the midmost of the graven rings
 The first Red Admiral suns his satin wings!
 The yeoman of signals made his curt report.
 'Impossible!' was Bingham's instant thought.
 He raised his glasses . . . number, form and hue:
 The German High Seas Fleet. Yes. It was true.

So then it was each knew that they were lost
And living ghost edged glance at living ghost.

What now approached was plain. Had they not
seen

The end of *Indefatigable* and *Queen Mary*,
two battle cruisers, Babel tall
And stouter bastioned than Jericho's wall,
Fall faster than Jericho or Babel fell,
Leaving, erect between the darkened swell
And heaven's illimitable fields of light,
Two columns of chaos three times Babel's height?

Out of the south the embattled castles rose
Troubling the air with thud of engine-throes,
Bringing with them, above their gliding towers,
Such an obscurity of gloom as lowers
Over the glimmering immensities
Of a rainswept unkempt metropolis.

Slowly they rose, but fast and faster neared,
Stack dragoning smoke and every turret reared,
Foam in their jaws, behind each masthead peak
The furious battle-flag hammering wings and beak
As if its Eagle sought to struggle free
To hunt St. George's samite from the sea.

Northwest they thrust their feverish battle thirst.

'They will sink both of course, but *Nomad* first.'
Even as Bingham thought it, down the aisle
Of that death-charged, death-dealing battle file
The first hot flush of flickering ripples ran.

Doom spoke. The *Nomad's* agony began.
It was soon ended. Flame, smoke, waterspout
Flickered and flowered and compassed her about,
Shadow and light and splitting air and sea
Smothered and cracked and leaped confusedly
And lifted and drifted and forsook their play,
And the sky shook. And Bingham turned away
To do the little else might yet be done
Ere flame and clamour should eclipse the sun.

Bingham and Rowe, working with vigilant haste,
Sunk Orders and Code and laid the Chart-room
waste;

Bethell among his men swung out the boats,
Lowered them and thrust forth the Carley floats.
And still doom lingered — What remained to do?
To die — but, dying, to die steady too.
Bethell, inspired, begged leave to make a show
Of ranging cables 'for a friendly tow' —
Not that he hoped — but 'to keep hands occupied'
And die — but he said it not — as the best have died.

The wings of death, sped upon thunder rolls,
Soared upward. Then were winnowed human
souls

By the shrill vehemence of those strepitant vans
That sift the craven's weakness from the man's.
Downward the pinions choired. Upon the wave
Coistrel more coward grew, more brave the brave
As each the vigil of his valour kept,
And suddenly inboard cloud and clangour swept,
The *Nestor* staggered, glittered and became
Flame sheeted with spindrift, spindrift shot with
flame.

Whatever mortal manhood could contrive
To do these did: with accurate haste let drive
Their last torpedo and espied it run
Well, so they thought. That done, their most was
done,
All other arms being impotent to smite
Those mountains of insuperable might.

Yet-obstinate flesh, unfleshed by fiery blast
Or flailed by flying steel, fell all too fast
While starboard *Nestor* listed, a mere wreck,
And seas astern slid seething up her deck,
Till, all-but-sunk, she settled in such plight
Could she have fought there scarce was deck to
fight,
And merciful Bingham, megaphone to lip,
Gave his last order: 'Hands—abandon ship!'

The rafts and motor-boat soon held their fill
And moved off orderly as if at drill
In some fair anchorage. And overhead
St. George's cross yet rippled white and red.
Bethell by Bingham stood. They had done their
most.

Now with all honour might each quit his post
And seek what safety either could discern. . . .
But shattered lay the dinghy, and astern
The dead already foundered in the wave.
Silence seemed waiting and a seaman's grave.

'And where do we go now?' brave Bingham said,
And Bethell, with his feet among the dead
Feeling the slant plate sink, the waters thrust,
Answered him cheerly, 'Why, to heaven I trust.'

O horn of Roland and the Frankish host,
Horn faintly holloaing from a phantom post
Beneath a red pine on the Pyrenees,
How do you echo in these northern seas!

*The Count Rollanz, sitting amid the slain
Against a pine tree, turns his eyes to Spain,
Remembering so many a divers thing
So many lands where he went conquering
And France, Fair France, and his heroic kith
And Charlemagne his liege-lord and therewith
The noble vasselage that lord made his.
Nor can he help but sigh and weep at this.
Yet his own frailty he not forgets
And a Just God's forgiveness he entreats,
'Very Father—in whom no turning's found,
Who Lazarus didst lift from underground,
And that Knight Daniel, whom pagan men
Made lion's meat, delivered from the den—
Save Thou my soul, that has such perils passed
Yet among perils lingers to the last,
As from the sins I did in life commit.'
He lifts his righthand gauntlet, proffers it
To God, all lordlings' Lord, and from his hand
A seraph takes it. Then, forespent, unmanned,
Head sunk, helm cherished, palm to praying palm,
Noble Count Rollanz passes beyond harm. . . .
His Seigneur, our Lord God, accepts his prayer
And sends forth Cherubim, among them fair
Gabriel, His especial messenger,
And Michael, foe of perilous Lucifer,
And many another Good Knight of the skies.
So the Count's soul these bare to Paradise.*

The pagan mocks. The pagan world denies.
'Well, once perchance, but certes, lords, not twice.'

Not so say we. All true men hold it true,
And most among these many those of you
Who across smoking field and spouting wave
Followed an earlier Bravest of the brave
And in His name all Selfdom sacrificed,
Captain of Captains, the Lord Jesus Christ.
Rejoice you therefore: Bethell is not dead,
Nor Roland, nor his peers, our friends who bled
Foundering earthward or beneath the wave.
The Lord God hears; Saint Michael will them save;
Ere flame or foam o'erwhelm the sacrifice
They with their Captain are in Paradise.



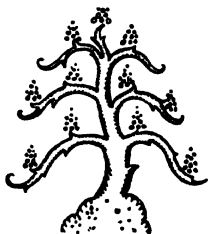
A. E.

FIRST LOVE

WHAT treasure would we not have poured
At the white feet when love had power,
If beauty that we had adored
Were tender to us for an hour!

I pass these burning memories by,
And run to find a child who lay
On the warm earth, made tender by
A love breathed up from the dark clay.

How can I win that love again?
All I could give to earth it owns.
What sacrifice must be, what pain,
To be at league with these grey stones.



HERBERT E. PALMER

SAINT JOAN: A MEDITATION AND A PRAYER

ALL that is nobly beautiful or true
Is very simple, simple as a song,
Like silver lettering on a sky of blue;
The disordered complex thing is often wrong.

When Genius triumphs it does the simple thing.
Great Wisdom seeks to say the obvious.
Thought which ascends is light upon the wing.
But what are wings? And what is obvious?

And yet Heaven's lines are clear transparent lines,
The scrolls of God are never nebulous.
It is the simple deed that glows and shines,
The simple word that wakes to quicken us.

For Righteousness and Truth are simple things;
And he who'd know them must be simple, too.
And who'd be greatly wise must get him wings,
So plain to understand, but hard to do,—

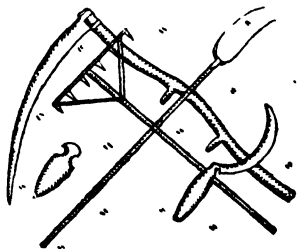
Because the Soul of Man is sick of late
Complex and scheming, growing old, it seems,
Too dull in worship, and too mean in hate,
Too cold to blaze with love or dream great
dreams.

Therefore, Saint Joan, I lift my heart to thee
Who from o'erflowing hands hast dreams to spill.
Oh! Gird us with thy white Simplicity;
Clothe us with Valour and the eternal Will.

For wast thou not inspired Simplicity!
In ignorance seeing, and in weakness strong,
Armed by the Saints and the high Trinity,
A child in years, yet wiser than earth's throng!

Give what we lack — thy penetrating eye,
Thy flame of purpose and clear strength of
will,
Thy fearlessness and contact with the Sky,
Thy power to ascend the sheer, impossible hill.

Queen! I invoke thee as the Earth the Sun —
Christ and Athene in thee reconciled;
Immense Simplicity, yet four in one,
Pure woman, warrior, goddess, and fair child.



L. STENI

LUCERNA PIETATIS

THERE with her hands as tender as the morning
She lit the lamp of pity that gleams on the world
of snow.

And the radiance of winter sunlight had crept with
its violet shadows

To glance on the slender flanks of clear silver

And the flame that shone like a star.

The wounded men have twisted their sorrow

Round the fragile distaff of her arms

Hanging in softest ivory

From the cloak that veils her dead passions,

And bow to the ghostly litanies

That hide in her delicate hands.

The lamp goes blindly, like a star

That follows the wounds of destiny,

And the shrouded lady carries her fate

And goes with her dead to the grave.

PARK SCENE

MY beautiful girl,
The swans that float on the great sad tides of
the melancholy river

And the sea birds preening their ghostly feathers

In the mirrored radiance of the pools at twilight,

Calling their shadow notes of love in dreams be-
neath the rustling trees

Are only the spectres that echo the tears we have
shed in that silent green land

That whispers the coming of night and the shroud
Of our wasted, empty love.

Dark pools that scintillate,

Your eyes have gathered in the scene;

Your lips have whispered, but not your heart

In that void grey life of our dreams.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

BUILDING OF THE HUDSON RIVER BRIDGE

THEOREM made of steel
Linking earth, water, sky,
In poised self-organised appeal,
Amid the droning myriads that daily strive and die;

Casting back still on time
The memory of that face
That out of thickets peered, when once did climb
The wild grape-cables twining in this place

From tree to tree in air
Ærial hammocks, until Hudson drew
More near to them and could their strength declare;
Him and his mutinous crew,

Now time has whelmed: from towers that steeper
are
Than ancient Babels, now the appalling weight
Of gray steel tentacles you stretch out afar
To the opposing shore, to bear a human freight.

Night's gulf beneath, you span
With outflung gesture, dwarfing by your scale
Native by the titanic schemes of man
Who crawls along you, puny wisp and frail:

Nor could the Gods disdain
To own you if their will be, ere time close,
To guide across the void our feet that pain
Up through the darkness, seeking what none
knows:—

Some superhuman law
Fluctuant as water, flexible as wind,
Poised as an ark of awe
Above the flood, to justify mankind:

One road 'twixt thought and ream,
Will and desire, free effort and fixed power;
Fire frozen to a force beyond fire's gleam:
Through man transcending yet man's mortal hour.

Therefore not lightly I,
Who marvelling have marked your towers soar
From the horizon of a full-charged sky
Of hope and fear, would speak one word the more:

That we may hold you not
As emblem of our grasping and our greed,
But rather as pure symbol of our lot.
There is a bridge before us we have need

To build; a bridge whose links
Are consciousness, whose roadway faith, whose
 anchoring towers
Are the flesh acting and the mind that thinks:
This bridge is not so easily made ours.

Since long ago were laid
Its first stones, ere man's annals 'gan to run,
And its last length is stayed
Here in a world made every hour more one.

Unless by knowledge fire-tried and freed,
The mutterings of the savage and that mind
That scaled this steel equation fuse in a human
 creed,
Then there is no bridge standing: vast and blind

Cables like arms stretch gauntly through the air
From nothingness to naught; till as the last days
run,
We hurl ourselves from them into the last despair:
Knowing we shall not consummate the bridge
'twixt night and sun.

Then this vain thing we schemed and strove to
build,
Girder and stanchion, bolt and strut and brace,
Will rest, a black abortion unfulfilled,
Shortly to take authentically its place

Where under the sunset bleeding, mad with fear,
The river blares its death-cry to the night,
And the sky's green eye stares frozen still where
sheer
Blank cables dredge the twinkling shoals of light.



HAROLD MONRO

ON THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL

NOW at the last grave moment who will come?
The scheme is ready; architects have made
Their plans, they say.
And so, to-morrow, what has been to-day
A lovely home
For trees and birds and children will become
Piled up with cranes and girders and the numb
Loud hammer will resound, the concrete grow—
O, some
Lover of air and trees and ground, do move
In charitable love!

Let us not tell
Of those first traitors who
Sold Coram's heart. That bitter tale is well
Untold.
But listen, you, and you!
All that is needed, is to save, to save;
And now the chance grows every hour more cold.

Think of the future, when they not yet born
Will mourn: 'Here was a lovely park, where trees
And children grew together. It was torn
Corruptly out of London to build these;
And children have no spaces left for play.'

A traitor to Mankind is man to-day.
What can we do? What offer? How contrive
To keep those trees and all that ground alive?

HUMBERT WOLFE

ARNOLD BENNETT: ROBERT BRIDGES

I

NOW that Arnold Bennett, whom we cherished,
is dead,

and Robert Bridges, that inveterate deep lover
of life will not toss again his lion head,

it is time to look back and tell their virtues over.
There was always a space, Arnold, in what you said,
a pretended stammer of thought as though to
cover

the young, and in spite of life, the astonished
fancies that cried as sadly as the wheeling plover
over the empty autumn fields to the spring. 'Re-
turn!

Where are your snowdrops now that the
bracken's brown?

Is there not always spring in a bird's sight?'
You also, Arnold, in the autumn would not learn
that the lilies crumple and the cowslips are trod-
den down.

'Come back!' you were always crying, and you
were right.

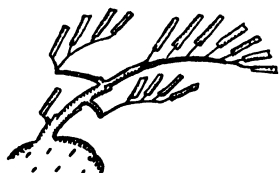
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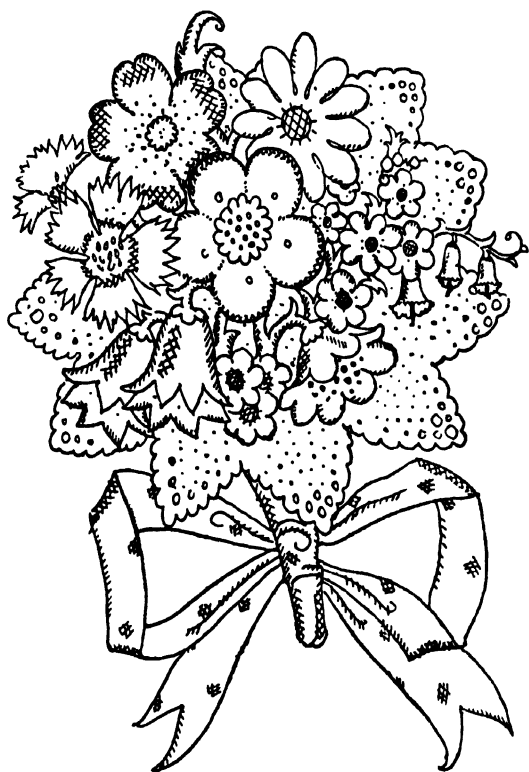
And you, Robert Bridges, you made your last will
and testament of beauty in the winter of your
thought,

but there was no snow of the mind falling upon
Boar's Hill

nor upon the further fields that your vision
sought.

You could have lingered a year with a daffodil,
pondering on the dust that could be so brightly
fraught
with unaccountable design, and yet could find the
thrill
of all matter for ever prevailing upon nought.
Long were your years, but their orbit was inwards
to the quiet at the heart of the cyclone where
leaves
and the butterflies hang as still as in amber,
or as dew on the crocus before it draws sunwards.
You are flown, you are melted, but when no
wind grieves
in the calm of the evening we shall remember.







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